

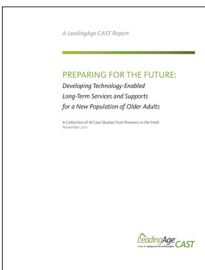


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Demonstrating innovations in design and technology to pave the way for a future life style in aging

The fourteenth in a series of case studies from the Preparing for the Future Report

- Through its association with CAST, Eskaton’s senior staff learned about technology tools, met potential vendors and collaborated with peers to advance the organization’s service models
- An appetite for product refinements and optimization was cultivated by soliciting regular feedback from staff and the interested public
- Implemented passive monitoring, which resulted in preventing hospitalization, early detection of dementia and keeping families informed of the health and cognitive status of their relatives
- A demonstration home helped dispel common misperceptions about universal design while promoting the applicability of aging-in-place technology, green design and smart lighting and appliances

The Organization

[Eskaton’s](#) primary mission is to enhance the quality of life of seniors through innovative health, housing and social services. Each year, the organization offers a full spectrum of aging services to 14,000 older adults throughout northern California. Its campuses provide a variety of housing and service options, including independent living, assisted living, memory care, hospice, respite care, rehabilitation and skilled nursing, and affordable apartments. In addition, Eskaton provides case management, telephone reassurance, companionship and transportation services, home health care and adult day services to older people living in the community. Its Senior Connection program sponsors a variety of free educational classes for older adults and caregivers and serves as a free and independent resource for information on available services for older adults and caregivers.

Technology-Enabled Model or Service

Eskaton’s interest in deploying technology-enabled services was sparked in 2005 when Sheri Peifer, the organization’s Vice President, Research and Strategic Planning, became a CAST commissioner. Eskaton’s association with CAST allowed the organization’s senior staff to learn about technology tools that could advance the organization’s service models. It also gave Eskaton staff the opportunity to network with major technology vendors and to collaborate and share information with peer aging services providers.

As a result of this interaction, technology rose to a new level of importance in the organization and led the board of directors to authorize investments in technology-related research and development. Those investments helped Eskaton deploy electronic health records (EHR) and a sensor-equipped remote monitoring system, and to build a national demonstration home featuring universal design, supportive technologies and “green” living features.

Implementation Approaches and Outcomes

Electronic Health Records: In 2007, Eskaton began the process to implement a complete EHR in its skilled nursing communities and licensed home health agency. The organization is currently implementing electronic medication administration records and care plans as the vendor works to complete the final components of a full EHR. Point-of-care kiosks complement the EHR system in Eskaton nursing communities by allowing frontline staff to quickly and accurately document the care they provide.

Eskaton's EHR system required the buy-in of a host of internal stakeholders, from frontline caregivers to top-level managers. Its health information managers, business office managers and registered nurses all participated in the original EHR planning team because they understood the current processes and how they would be affected by an EHR implementation. The organization listened carefully when those staff members made suggestions. For example, Eskaton decided to purchase point-of-care kiosks when staff indicated that carrying handheld devices while providing hands-on care would be cumbersome.

Remote Monitoring: Eskaton has deployed approximately 350 QuietCare sensor-equipped passive monitoring systems in its independent, assisted living and memory support apartments. The organization has quantitative and qualitative evidence that this passive monitoring system is helping staff identify emerging resident health concerns in a timely manner and provide early interventions before those issues become serious enough to require hospitalization. In addition, the system is being credited with detecting early signs of dementia in residents, and in helping families better understand the health and cognitive status of their relatives.

National Demonstration Home: Eskaton built its national demonstration home to shine a spotlight on universal design and aging-in-place technology and to dispel the common misconception that age-friendly design must look institutional. The well-appointed home incorporates 100 universal design elements featured in Eskaton's Livable Design Program, a certification program for single-family homes that meet Eskaton-developed universal design guidelines. The home also features green design; social connectivity, cognitive fitness, healthy living and reminder technologies; and smart lighting and appliances. More than 2,800 consumers and professionals have toured the home with the help of docents who explain its features.

The dining room of the National Demonstration Home contains three touchscreen computers where visitors complete a survey after touring the home. Survey results have provided valuable insights into consumers' attitudes toward aging-in-place, including their willingness to pay

\$10,000-\$25,000 more for a dwelling that incorporates universal design features. Eskaton worked with 19 partners, including technology vendors, to design, build and equip its demonstration home. During this process, the organization's staff educated vendors about the aging process and encouraged them to work together to integrate their varied technology platforms into the home. Feedback from Eskaton spurred some vendors to modify products to increase their user-friendliness.

Eskaton Technical Services (ETS): Eskaton knew that many of the older adults entering its communities would need assistance with the latest technology products. The ETS program was created specifically to provide residents with training, technical support and access to the latest technology products. These offerings, coupled with free, building-wide Wi-Fi, enable residents to expand their knowledge of and accessibility to new technologies, including Skype, email and Internet searching.

Challenges

Outdated infrastructure: Some of Eskaton's initial technology-related challenges revolved around basic infrastructure issues. For example, the organization owns many older buildings that were not adequately equipped to support wireless monitoring devices and point-of-care kiosks. In some cases, older buildings had to be carefully assessed and rewired before technology solutions could be implemented.

Incompatible technology components: Eskaton's long-range plan is to ensure that every individual who comes in contact with any of the organization's programs and services will have an EHR that can be accessed by appropriate clinicians and team members throughout the organization. The organization has already been frustrated by its inability to find an EHR system that is flexible enough to meet this goal and, at the same time, comply with federal regulations. Eskaton currently has two separate EHR systems deployed in its skilled nursing communities and its licensed home health care division. It deployed a third electronic data collection platform (not an EHR) in its assisted living/memory care apartments and is currently seeking a fully compatible EHR system for all levels of living and services provided throughout Eskaton, including independent living services.

Licensing survey teams: Eskaton encountered an unexpected challenge during the first year after it began working towards an EHR in its skilled nursing communities. The state evaluators who arrived for the organization's annual survey were not familiar with the new EHR system and required that Eskaton share paper, not electronic, records with the survey team. Much of the

challenge was the fact that part of the record was electronic and part was still paper. This frustrated the surveyors and required more work by the staff to provide the appropriate documentation. Ultimately, Eskaton staff provided laptops to the survey team when they arrived for subsequent visits and trained team members on how to access and understand the organization's EHR and remaining paper-based records.

The Business Case

The Eskaton Foundation paid for installation of QuietCare in two assisted living/memory support communities. Once installed, the monitoring service became part of Eskaton's standard of care and is available at no additional cost to all residents. Eskaton made this decision because it views passive monitoring as a natural evolution of the traditional emergency call system.

Eskaton continues to be challenged to develop a business model around technology-enabled services that makes those services affordable to a broad range of consumers and throughout all of Eskaton's housing and services. With multiple demands for capital expenditures and operational costs that must be managed and maintained, especially during the pressures of this "new normal" economy, Eskaton proactively monitors both tangible returns on investment and intangible returns, such as anecdotal feedback from families and residents about their Eskaton experience and increased wellbeing.

Key to Success

An active board of directors: In 2004, Eskaton's board of directors switched to a policy governance model that freed its members to make strategic decisions aimed at ensuring that Eskaton will continue offering services that future

consumers will find appealing and relevant. To advance its strategic planning work, the board places a high priority on educating its members about current trends in the field, and it has been vocal about its desire for Eskaton to be an innovator in the field of aging services. As a result, Eskaton's strategic plan integrates technology into each of the organization's four strategic directions.

Advice to Others

Provide good customer support. Before any technology deployment takes place, an Eskaton information technology training team learns all it can about the system, educates staff on how to use the tool, and provides excellent customer service to staff people who need assistance after the launch. They also continue to train new employees, as well as existing staff, to maintain usage standards and compliance. This gives the communities the ability to have new employees hit the ground running while, at the same time, providing a strong base upon which they can continue to build.

Identify community champions. Eskaton assesses and identifies at least two champions at each community to embrace the technology tool that will be integrated. These persons are leaders in their communities and are able to communicate positively and provide solutions to challenges that may arise.

Offer opportunities for ongoing peer-to-peer support. Monthly meetings are held among peers who are using various technologies, whether it is EHRs, passive monitoring systems or resident social networking portals. Taking part in ongoing communications and sharing best practice information helps each peer contribute to improving Eskaton's processes and experience. ■

LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies:

The LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST) is focused on development, evaluation and adoption of emerging technologies that will transform the aging experience. As an international coalition of more than 400 technology companies, aging-services organizations, businesses, research universities and government representatives, CAST works under the auspices of LeadingAge, an association of 5,400 not-for-profit organizations dedicated to expanding the world of possibilities for aging. For more information, please visit LeadingAge.org/CAST